REMARKS

Claims 1-8 are pending in the application. Independent claims 1 and 5 have been amended to recite "performing invalidation of all of" the stored image data, so as to clarify that all image data are invalidated (deleted). The amendments are fully supported by the application as originally filed (see, e.g., specification at page 35, line 3 to page 36, line 21; and FIGS. 8-10 of the application).

As amended, independent claim 1 recites an image processing device in which an image data invalidating means performs invalidation of all of the image data stored in an image data storing means, i.e., deletes all areas of the image data storing means, which can be a hard disk. *See, e.g.,* page 35, line 3 to page 36, line 21 of the Applicants' specification, referring to a "delete all data area" key b1 that can be pressed to delete all image data in a hard disk 12. Therefore, all data areas, including unprocessed data, are invalidated (deleted) to maintain security. Independent claim 5 recites an image processing method including a similar limitation.

The Applicants' claimed invention can overcome a conventional problem of invalidating image data storage areas of a hard disk device with a large storage capacity, whereby during such an invalidation process, the machine conventionally is not capable of executing a new process until the invalidation process is completed. According to the Applicants' claimed invention, processing of new image data can be carried out without delay when a user requests such urgent processing during the invalidation process by suspending the invalidation process if a specified condition is met. *See, e.g.,* page 4, line 20 to page 5, line 13 of the Applicants' specification.

Claims 1-6 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 6,285,459 to Koakutsu et al. ("Koakutsu") in view of Japanese Publication 09-284572 (referred to as "Tokukaihei"), further in view of U.S. Patent 6,745,334 to Ikegami. Claims 7 and 8 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Koakutsu in view of Tokukaihei, further in view of Ikegami, further in view of U.S. Patent 6,639,687 to Neilsen, further in view of "well known art." These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Regarding the rejection of independent claims 1 and 5 over the proposed combination of Koakutsu in view of Tokukaihei, further in view of Ikegami, the proposed combination does not teach or suggest that invalidation of all of the stored image data is performed, and where entry of a password is required for suspension of the invalidation that is being performed, such that "after a predetermined code is inputted by a user, the predetermined code being matched with a code administrated in the image processing device to confirm that the user who requested the suspension of the invalidation is a certified user, and the permitting means then suspends the invalidation being performed in all areas of the image data storing means," as recited in independent claim 1 (*see also* independent claim 5).

In Tokukaihei, it is checked which area of a hard disk contains image data that has been copied (see paragraph 0052 of Tokukaihei). Further, it is checked whether or not the hard disk has an area to be deleted (see paragraph 0054 of Tokukaihei). If there is an area to be deleted, then "the image data stored in one of the areas subjected to deletion ... is deleted" (see English-language translation of paragraph 0055 of Tokukaihei).

In Ikegami, as described in the abstract and throughout the specification, a plurality of personal box areas are allocated to respective individuals, each personal box area being associated with a name and a first password (or a second password, if the first password has not been registered). It is a precondition that the memory as a whole has a plurality of personal boxes, where a different password is assigned to each personal box, and the personal box is deleted using the password.

In particular, the Ikegami reference discloses that a personal box area 901 "is subdivided into areas uniquely identified by personal box numbers" (see column 10, lines 1-3 of Ikegami). Ikegami requires a plurality of personal boxes each assignable with a number and a password, for example, a first password and/or a second password (see, e.g., column 10, line 23; column 11, lines 64-66; and column 12, lines 9-15 of Ikegami).

There is no teaching or suggestion in Ikegami that only one personal box of Ikegami "can be the only box in the entire memory or can be the only box with data in the entire memory," as alleged on page 2 of the Office Action of 03/25/2010. The provision of only one personal box or only one personal box with data would defeat a primary benefit for utilizing personal boxes in Ikegami, i.e., that a personal box area 901 is subdivided into a plurality of personal boxes, and each personal box is separately registered and password protected, and contains image data as specified by a user (see, e.g., column 9, line 63 to column 10, line 22 of Ikegami).

According to Ikegami, in normal operation of the image forming apparatus, a hard disk is subdivided into a plurality of personal boxes, which contain bitmap image data as specified by users, where each personal box is separately registered and password protected. Therefore, any proper combination of Tokukaihei in view of Ikegami would necessitate separate entry of passwords for deleting separate "personal boxes" or portions of a hard disk, and thus separate password entry to access those personal boxes and/or stop deletion of the respective portions of the hard disk.

The proposed combination of Koakutsu in view of Tokukaihei, further in view of Ikegami, does not teach or suggest deleting all storage areas. According to both Tokukaihei and Ikegami, image data or a personal box is deleted in one storage area at a time. Therefore, even if these references are somehow combined, entry of a correct password would be required to delete a personal box or storage area, which would not result in deletion of other storage areas.

Further, the proposed combination of Koakutsu in view of Tokukaihei, further in view of Ikegami, does not teach or suggest that entry of a password is required for suspension of an invalidation/deletion that is being performed, such that "after a predetermined code is inputted by a user, the predetermined code being matched with a code administrated in the image processing device to confirm that the user who requested the suspension of the invalidation is a certified user, and the permitting means then suspends the invalidation being performed in all areas of the image data storing means," as claimed.

Even if the device of Tokukaihei was somehow modified to include "personal boxes" as disclosed in Ikegami, it would be necessary to enter a separate password to access each personal box, as taught by Ikegami, whether for the purpose of deleting the personal box or suspending deletion. It would destroy the operability of the Ikegami reference to somehow allow entry of a single password to access multiple personal boxes or portions of memory.

For at least the reasons discussed above, the proposed combination of Koakutsu in view of Tokukaihei, further in view of Ikegami, does not teach or suggest the Applicants' claimed invention. Therefore, independent claims 1 and 5 and their respective dependent claims are patentable over the proposed combination.

It is believed the application is in condition for immediate allowance, which action is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

/Steven M. Jensen/

Date: May 25, 2010

Steven M. Jensen
(Reg. No. 42,693)
Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge
P.O. Box 55874
Boston, MA 02205

Phone: (617) 517-5531

Customer No. 21874